

## **Imperfect Leadership**

Good to see everyone again. I have to admit that flying across the world to be with you all can be rather intimidating. While I've worked 12 years in parish ministry, published a book, with another one on the way I feel somewhat unqualified to speak about leadership.

After all who am I? I'm just a guy who works with the next generation. I don't have my Master's or Doctorate in Theology. I'm just a guy who loves the next generation, the local church and God. I've made mistakes, I've been rude to people instead of pastoral. There have been times I've made decisions based on my pride instead of what God has asked me to do.

There was one time I was supposed to raise money for a good cause. Because I didn't make the best decisions I ended up losing \$3200 of the church's money. But, I'm still here, I'm still leading the next generation and that's because I have a pastor that sees something more in me and a God who has a plan for me.

There are going to be times in your ministry and leadership where you will wonder:

### **AM I GOOD ENOUGH?**

It's one that haunts us because of doubt and failure. It's a question that many great leaders face. In the story of Esther we find a young woman who faces the same doubts. The story starts out during a time when the Israelites are under the rule of King Ahasuerus.

He is a ruthless king, someone not to be reckoned with. At the beginning of the story we find him entertaining some guests. And as a form of entertainment he decides to bring out the Queen Vashti to show her off.

But, Queen Vashti, she's doesn't want to play along and refuses to grace her presents to King Ahaseurus and his buddies. As I mentioned he's a little ruthless and gets upset. So, he does the only logical thing and decides to find a new queen.

So, the king makes a decree:

***"Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. 3Let the king appoint emissaries in all the provinces of his realm to gather all beautiful young virgins into the harem in the royal precinct of Susa. Under the care of the royal eunuch Hegai, guardian of the women, let cosmetics be given them. 4Then the young woman who pleases the king shall reign in place of Vashti." - Esther 2:2-4***

One of the women they gather is our heroine Esther. This is a bonus for all the Jews because one of their own is in. This could lead to great influence and eventually lead

them to be freed from captivity. However, for fear of what the king might do if he discovers her Jewish heritage she keeps it quiet.

Fortunately for her Mordecai her cousin and caretaker is an official in the king's court. Throughout the process he's able to watch over her, give her inside information and communicate what is going on in the kingdom.

Finally Esther is presented to the king and scripture says:

***17The king loved Esther more than all other women, and of all the virgins she won his favor and good will. So he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. 18Then the king gave a great feast in honor of Esther to all his officials and servants, granting a holiday to the provinces and bestowing gifts with royal generosity. – Esther 2:17-18***

So, everything is going according to plan. Life is good and it even gets better because not only is Esther made queen but her cousin Mordecai earns favor when he uncovers a plot to assassinate the king.

All is good, right?

Well, everything is going well until someone walks in and starts planting seeds of doubt and gets in the way. That ever happened to you? Have things ever gone well for you and then someone spoils it? Yeah, me neither.

But, things were incredible and then in walks Haman. Who is he? Haman is another official of the king's court and he also earns favor and is promoted to oversee all the officials. Basically he becomes the king's right hand man.

When promoted he makes a decree where the other officials need to bow down and pay homage to him. Mordecai knowing that no one is more powerful than God refuses and this naturally rubs Haman the wrong way. But, he decides it's beneath him to punish Mordecai. So, what does he do? The next logical step:

***Since they had told Haman of Mordecai's nationality, he sought to destroy all the Jews, Mordecai's people, throughout the realm of King Ahasuerus. – Esther 3:6***

He wants to destroy the Jewish people and he goes to the king and tells him:

***“Dispersed among the nations throughout the provinces of your kingdom, there is a certain people living apart. Their laws differ from those of every other people and they do not obey the laws of the king; so it is not proper for the king to tolerate them.9If it please the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them; and I will deliver to the procurators ten thousand silver talents for deposit in the royal treasury.” – Esther 3:8-9***

And the King doesn't want that. He doesn't want people disobeying so he takes the bait from Haman and gives him supreme power over taking out these people. When Mordecai learns about this decree he flips out. He goes to Esther and explains what happens.

Esther is equally distressed; however, she now faces a huge challenge. Mordecai asks her to go to the king and ask for his mercy. She's got this power, she has this influence and she has the opportunity to save her people. But, she pushes back:

***11 "All the servants of the king and the people of his provinces know that any man or woman who goes to the king in the inner court without being summoned is subject to the same law—death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter will such a person live. Now as for me, I have not been summoned to the king for thirty days." – Esther 4:11***

She knows that you don't just come in and interrupt the king. Even if you are his wife, the queen, you can't just walk in and say, "*Honey, you know that genocide decree you just signed...would you mind just forgetting about it? Maybe focus more of your attention on the kids.*"

I mean she remembers what happened to the last queen Vashti...I mean she's gone. So, she tells Mordecai, I don't think I'm the person for the job.

But, Mordecai has bigger faith. He knows that God is in control and tells her:

***"Do not imagine that you are safe in the king's palace, you alone of all the Jews. 14 Even if you now remain silent, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another source; but you and your father's house will perish. Who knows—perhaps it was for a time like this that you became queen?" – Esther 4:13-14***

I love that last line:

***Who knows—perhaps it was for a time like this that you became queen?" – Esther 4:14***

Mordecai knows that God will bring freedom to the Jews, he just believes that Esther is the person to carry out the mission. But, she is scared and I think we've all been there before.

Maybe we haven't been charged with saving an entire nation, but we've been asked to take a big leap. We've been asked to take a leadership role with the church. And with that role comes the responsibility to create change.

You and I want change in the church. We want to see it grow and reach and impact the next generation; however, to make that can seem daunting. You could hesitate on taking on that role because you:

*Fear that you don't have the answers and will look foolish.*

*Know it will bring on conflict and you want people to be as excited as you are about the journey ahead.*

*Don't want to fail and let people down.*

What you are facing can seem larger than life. The situation you are in to lead others to make church matter is daunting and there are nights where you feel so overwhelmed that you are begging and pleading to God, "*Can you find someone else to take care of this?*"

Dwelling on that question might not bring you the answer you might want. Instead think about what Mordecai told Esther:

***Who knows—perhaps it was for a time like this that you became queen?" – Esther 4:14***

Who knows maybe God has put you in this situation, with these people and this time for a reason. You are where God wants you to be and how he's going to help you comes down to how well you are listening to Him.

Anytime you doubt your ability to lead and do what God is asking you to do you need to:

## **GO TO HIM**

As we see in the story that's what Esther does right away. She hears the words of Mordecai and tells him:

***16"Go and assemble all the Jews who are in Susa; fast on my behalf, all of you, not eating or drinking night or day for three days. I and my maids will also fast in the same way. Thus prepared, I will go to the king, contrary to the law. If I perish, I perish!" – Esther 4:16***

She tells Mordecai to gather a group to pray for her. She realizes that no matter her decision God is going to make things happen. She just has to decide whether she is going to be blessed by the situation.

So she goes to God and asks him for the right words and actions. Whenever you are facing a time of conflict you need to ask God for the right words and He will deliver.

So before you approach that family member, friend, classmate or coworker ask God, "Let your words be mine."

We also have to make sure we are:

### **ASKING OTHERS TO JOIN US IN PRAYER**

Esther doesn't just pray on her own, she asks Mordecai, the other Jews and her maids to pray with her. As a staff every week we pray together. We pray for everything happening inside of the parish, and we pray for one another. By doing this we are asking God to continue to bless us. We are asking God to show us what to do next.

And so, Esther is blessed and she gathers the courage to go to the king. Check out what happens:

***7As he looked up in extreme anger, his features fiery and majestic, the queen staggered, turned pale and fainted, collapsing against the maid in front of her. 8But God changed the king's anger to gentleness. In great anxiety he sprang from his throne, held her in his arms until she recovered, and comforted her with reassuring words.9"What is it, Esther?" he said to her. "I am your brother. Take courage! 10You shall not die; this order of ours applies only to our subjects. - Esther 15:7-10***

God changes the king's anger to gentleness. He takes away the fear and Esther is able to tell the king everything. When he learns that Haman was only looking to have revenge on Mordecai he grew angry. Mordecai had saved the king's life, and Esther had been loyal.

The king confronts Haman who he learns is looking to now kill Mordecai. He not only removes Haman from power but puts him to death. And in his place promotes Mordecai to take his place.

This is a huge victory for not only Esther and Mordecai but the entire Jewish nation. They find favor with the king and are allowed to practice their faith and traditions with freedom.

I don't know what you, and your parish are facing.

*Maybe you are in so much debt that you aren't sure whether or not you can keep the doors open.*

*Maybe you aren't able to attract the next generation so you aren't sure whether the church will continue to grow or decline.*

*Maybe you feel like there is so much going on and you are all alone and it's overwhelming, exhausting and debilitating.*

But, maybe you are right there for a reason. Maybe it doesn't matter what you think of yourself because God knows that you are capable. I mean think about it:

*He asked a murderer, Moses, to save his people.*

*He asked an adulterer, David, to lead a nation.*

*He called upon fishermen to disciple thousands.*

*He recruited one of the greatest Christian hunters to be one of the greatest evangelizers of all time.*

Do you have flaws? Yes. Are you perfect? No. But, it doesn't matter who you are, where you are from or what you have done God has you right where he needs you for a reason. And whatever God wants to do will be done, the question is are you going to accept His invitation to be a part of something great.

As you go back to your parishes I want you to go to Him. Gather your friends, your coworkers and volunteers and just ask Him to bless you right where you are. Ask Him to speak through you. Ask Him to guide you and know that He will guide you through. He will guide you through and bless you because this is the time.

### **Bibelstellen auf Deutsch:**

Est 2,2 - 4: Da sagten die Pagen des Königs: Man sollte für den König schöne junge Mädchen suchen. Der König soll in jeder Provinz seines Reiches Männer beauftragen, alle schönen jungen Mädchen in den Frauenpalast auf der Burg Susa zu bringen und dem königlichen Kämmerer Hegai, dem Aufseher der Frauen, zu übergeben. Dort sollen sie der nötigen Schönheitspflege unterzogen werden. Und das Mädchen, das dem König gefällt, soll anstelle Waschtis Königin werden.

Est 2,17-18: Und der König liebte Ester mehr als alle Frauen zuvor und sie gewann seine Gunst und Zuneigung mehr als alle anderen Mädchen. Er setzte ihr das königliche Diadem auf und machte sie anstelle Waschtis zur Königin. Der König veranstaltete zu Ehren Esters ein großes Festmahl für alle seine Fürsten und Diener. Den Provinzen gewährte er einen Steuererlass und mit königlicher Freigebigkeit teilte er Geschenke aus.

Est 3,6 Aber es schien ihm nicht genug, nur Mordechai zu beseitigen. Da man ihm gesagt hatte, welchem Volk Mordechai angehörte, wollte Haman alle Juden im Reich des Artaxerxes vernichten - das ganze Volk Mordechais.

Est 3,8-9: Darauf sagte Haman zu König Artaxerxes: Es gibt ein Volk, das über alle Provinzen deines Reiches verstreut lebt, aber sich von den anderen Völkern absondert. Seine Gesetze sind von denen aller anderen Völker verschieden; auch die Gesetze des Königs befolgen sie nicht. Es ist nicht richtig, dass der König ihnen das durchgehen lässt.

Wenn der König einverstanden ist, soll ein schriftlicher Erlass herausgegeben werden, sie auszurotten. Dann kann ich den Schatzmeistern zehntausend Talente Silber übergeben und in die königlichen Schatzkammern bringen lassen.

Est 4,11: Alle Diener des Königs und alle Einwohner der königlichen Provinzen wissen, dass für jeden, Mann oder Frau, der zum König in den inneren Hof geht, ohne gerufen worden zu sein, das gleiche Gesetz gilt: Man tötet ihn. Nur wenn der König ihm das goldene Zepter entgegenstreckt, bleibt er am Leben. Ich bin schon dreißig Tage nicht mehr zum König gerufen worden.

Est 4,13-14: Mordechai ließ Ester erwidern: Glaub ja nicht, weil du im Königspalast lebst, könntest du dich als Einzige von allen Juden retten.

Wenn du in diesen Tagen schweigst, dann wird den Juden anderswoher Hilfe und Rettung kommen. Du aber und das Haus deines Vaters werden untergehen. Wer weiß, ob du nicht gerade dafür in dieser Zeit Königin geworden bist?

Est 4,16: Geh und ruf alle Juden zusammen, die in Susa leben. Fastet für mich! Esst und trinkt drei Tage und Nächte lang nichts! Auch ich und meine Dienerinnen wollen ebenso fasten. Dann will ich zum König gehen, obwohl es gegen das Gesetz verstößt. Wenn ich umkomme, komme ich eben um.

Est 5,1: Als er aufblickte und die Königin in wildem Zorn mit feuerrotem Gesicht ansah, wurde sie bleich, fiel in Ohnmacht und sank auf die Schulter der Dienerin, die vorausging. Da erweichte Gott das Herz des Königs. Besorgt sprang er vom Thron auf und nahm sie in seine Arme, bis sie wieder zu sich kam. Dann redete er ihr mit freundlichen Worten zu und sagte: Was hast du, Ester? Ich bin dein Bruder, sei unbesorgt! Du sollst nicht sterben; denn unser Befehl gilt nur für die anderen. Komm her!